Prospective witnesses- the Autopsy doctors 1/6/69
Drs. Humes, Boswell, Finck Harold Weisberg

In my original analysis I made the inexcusable mistake of believing it was possible for the Warren Commission to be right about anything. So, when these doctors were led into testimony that established on the record that each had competence in forensic pathology, I never dreamed this would be false. It was. Only Finck, who was not in charge, had had any meaningful experience with gunshot wounds at all. These men were of undoubted competence in ordinary hospital deaths but not in crimes of violence. Incredible as it seems, it is exactly as I put it in WHITEWASH II: the President got an autopsy unworthy of a Bowery bum; his accused assassin got an autopsy befitting the President of the United States.

Then Commander James J. Humes was the chief pathologist at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. His next-in-charge was then-Commander J. Thornton Boswell. Boswell waited a decent time to return to civilian life. Humes waited until he made captain, then also became a civilian, waiting long enough to appear on the CBS videowhitewash as a Captain. His address can be easily found. It is in the midwest. Boswell is in suburban Washington, living and working near the Naval Hospital. He is pathologist at Suburban Hospital, in Montgomery County. His home and office are both at 8600 Old Georgetown Road, phone 301/OL6-7449 and OL6-6000 (off). Colonel Pierre Finck, when last I checked up on him, has a phone listed at the Pentagon. He is, or at least was, chief of the Wounds Ballistics Branch. He seemed to spend most of his time out of the country, in Vietnam, where even his office told me they didn't know his address. Since the JFK assassination, he seems to have developed a weakness for nervous breakdowns. Dr. Jack Nichols was my source on this. It is possible he has kept up with Finck and Humes. Through his pathologists directories I am certain he can supply the addresses that are current. Of course, if Finck has been staying in the US lately, he can be reached at his home, 7541-14nw, RE RA 3-4154 This is near Walter Reed Medical Center, the Army's equivalent of Bethesda Naval Hospital (RA3-1000). Jack has more or less kept tabs on these men. I suggest that if you have any questions about their careers subsequent to the assassination, he may know the answers. To keep you from looking it up, his phones in Kansas City are: MI2-9460 (home) and AD3-5252, ext. 350 (off). He is spending most of his time at his office. He is working on a manuscript. I didn't ask him, but it seems to me possible he might be at the New Orleans meetings Wecht is attending the 17th and 18th, and it is not beyond possibility that the others, all or some, may be there. The registrations will tell you. If they are, it simplifies issuing subpenas.

Possibly because I have no separate recollection of Sylvia Meagher's writing I believe that the chapter "The Doctors and the Autopsy", together with the one before it, "The Number of Shots", in WHITEWASH, are, although the first, still the definitive published work on the autopsy. I amplified it in part 2 of WHITEWASH II. Since then I have written POST MORTEM, which has (with the addition of new material discovered since it was completed 9/67) all that has since come to light, and that I think is the most shocking stuff in our history. I'd prefer that this not be gone into at the trial, for I have a fortune in time and money tied up in that manuscript. If it is necessary, okay, if you do it with me as the witness, testifying to the document I discovered and how I discovered them (the hottest misfiled, destroyed every place they are supposed to exist in the files). I will have the manuscript and the documents with me. It depends on your approach and what can be done in a court of law, but I repeat what I wrote in the memo on the Parkland doctors, having Spector as a witness could be quite something. I sure wish I could question him!

Of the three autopsy doctors, if you have to stick to one, I recommend Humes. Especially with his subsequent statements, which I have, he will come apart or commit perjury. Either way, he will help. I have, for example, the text of the CBS show, where he lied. It would help to know what and how you intend to do and go into, for there is a limit to how much I can carry. I could take a briefcase full of stuff on just the autopsy.

In saying above that my chapter remains the definitive work, I do not want to imply there is nothing else. I suggest only that if there is time for but limited reading, this should be it. I have already recommended the appendix Wecht wrote from Thompson. Epstein, who visualizes the most awful conspiracy any writer has suggested, the rewriting of the autopsy after January 20, nonetheless is quite wrong, for he just didn't and doesn't know the material. The autopsy was done over immediately, for the reasons set forth in POST-MORTEM. In a sense, this and what relates is much worse, If you have to go into, we can discuss it when I am there or if Jim comes up to argue in District of Columbia court.

I do not have the Houts book, which is on Helperin. I do have the magazine piece, which goes into that part, and I have and will bring the Journal of the American Medical Association issue on it. Helperin assumes what he does not know and what is false and from there, wrong as he is, nonetheless quite rightly clobbers the autopsy doctors as incompetent because they lacked the training and experience for that kind of autopsy. However, he assumes the correctness of the basic Commission conclusions, like Epstein, without examining them at all.

I also have in POST MORTEM Specter's carefully-dated notes of his pre-deposition questioning of Humes (and, I think, Boswell). My recollection is that this and the subsequent testimony he adduced are sufficient for the charge of perjury and its subornation. In any event, there is little that is crucial in the Humes testimony that will stand cross-examination, particularly against the testimony of the Secret Service agents. If we add to this the observations of the FBI agents present, Humes is in deep trouble. It is my opinion he will go to any length to avoid being a witness. He cannot be a decent man and survive it, personally or professionally, without a plaint of "mea culpa", to complain that he was not adequate to the task and it should not have been assigned to him. I have also Specter's notes on his questioning of the FBI agents at the autopsy, Siebert and O'Neill, whom he thereafter was careful not to call as witnesses. I think it would be good to try and subpoena these two, but if such testimony is permitted, it is I who discovered their report, though it first appeared, by a strange series of unexpected events, in the appendix to the reprint of "Inquest". I have conducted what I think can qualify as an exhaustive investigation of the autopsy. I think it required as much time as a doctorate.

But, if you restrict yourself to what is published, you can utterly destroy the autopsy. The notes that were burned - and Humes burned them - are not the notes Mark pimps for headlines, knowing, for I taught him in August 1966, that he is wrong. The autopsy notes were never burned. I have traced them from the autopsy bench to the witness chair, with the appropriate receipts, which I have. What was burned was the first holograph autopsy. Changes were then made in the second holograph, often substantive, not editorial (I have made a word by word comparison of all 15 pages), and one pivotal one that was not made by Humes. This is where he omitted what Perry told him <u>the day after the assassination</u>, when he was rewriting the draft: the President's neck wound was a front wound. Everybody seems to have missed this obvious thing. It is in the fourth paragraph. I have a facsimile in the appendix to WHITEWASH. Even so, Humes and Finck both said, and Boswell, that there could have been no single-bullet explanation of the non-fatal injuries. He cannot explain the rear non-fatal wound, not when he is examined (is there any doubt he would be ruled unfriendly?), and Jack Nichols has a very simple and totally devastating thing on this I am ashamed of myself for not tumbling to, for it requires no medical knowledge- I just missed it. If you can get Humes against the agents on the stand, you should wind up with something real good, for what they will say is entirely other than he will, and he is their original source...He never saw the pictures, and he can hardly have used the available X-rays during his examination of the body. Yet he said he "re-examined" the pictures when they were put in the Archives (I have the contract and correspondence with the executor,

Archivist (I really think is is what led him to retire early), etc. Two batches of pictures didn't come out, incredible as this may seem when you know the very stiff federal prerequisites for medical photographer. The pictures and prints returned to the government do not add up against what is recorded as having been taken, etc.

Do not allow yourself to be booby-trapped on the X-rays. They are very significant, but not in the way you think from what you have said. They cannot show the path of bullets through the body or where they entered or exited, unless they hit bone, for tissue does not show in X-rays, bone does. They will show metal, for example, which is significant. The pictures, I think, are the thing, and if I were to make a wild guess, I'd say that the two batches that did not turn out include the crucial ones on entry and exit. Now there has been extensive inaccurate writing about the pictures and X-rays. In fact, since their "return", I recall no single accurate article, including that by Lise in the Sat. Eve. Post. The truth is not that Bobby refused them- he didn't; not that Warren prohibited it;quite the contrary (and I have all of this from the suppressed stuff). The existing documentary evidence points at Rankin, for at one point Warren ordered him to arrange an examination. The Commission never even considered asking Bobby about the pictures and X-rays until after it had taken its autopsy testimony. It never had any direct contact on this at all. Again, I have the documents in POST MORTEM.

Parenthetically, I think a subpena to the Archives for the suppressed part of Jackie's testimony, that on the wounds, is in order. She was the only close eyewitness in the world, the only one close enough to him to see what they looked like. I suggest it is not good taste that led the Commission (again,I suggest this means Rankin or Rankin-Specter) voluntarily to expunge her testimony on this from the printed evidence. I have tried without success to get access to it under any circumstances and been denied, repeatedly. Int the legal sense, I have exhousted my administrative remedies.

If you ask Humes to repeat under oath what he has said in public you nail him on perjury, for he never saw the pictures until he was shown a set in the fall of 1966. The best he could then have said is that they show what he then recalled having seen on his autopsy bench.

Contrary to what is generally thought of his testimony and the misrepresentation of it in the Report, he never did say that he traced the path of the rear-entry bullet through the body. He merely assume it. This is not only his testimony, but it is something else I have from a suppressed official source in POST MORTEM. With the body before them, there was no such path, and they took the body apart, which is what one does in an autopsy. And, if you had gotten the stills I tried to get you to get from LIFE, he would even have trouble with his testimony about the head wound, the fatal one or ones, for I am certain there were two head shots, as examination of the movie shows, as you saw when I showed it to you. Here I am not talking about what Thompson lifted from Marcus, which is too technical for the jury to get easily. There is a visible forward movement before the 313 shot. That, of course, shown to him, should also throw him if he is asked to explain it in terms of his autopsy report.

This is too hasty, for I have to leave for town and want to get it typed so I can get it in today's mail. We have a prediction for sleet, which will make driving through the mountains uncongenial. It may seem chaotic. Let me summarize that I can supply any detail you may want. Humes did the autopsy and wrote the report on it. Boswell and Finck were his assistants. They did little. Boswell will go to pieces on the body chart, with what I have. He is the one who did it, not Humes, as Clark and the others say. I had a reporter friend interview him and I have what he then said, which is ridiculous and would ruin him on examination (if he retracts it, he can say only what is more damaging). Humes wrote the autopsy first

telling me the ostensible purpose of each call). Now, please remember my stipulation on POST MORTEM. Humes rewrote thex autopsy report in his own home, in the recreation room, burning the original in the fireplace (and was never asked why, nor was this ever frowned upon). When?

AFTER HE KNEW OSWALD HAD BEEN MURDERED AND IT WOULD NOT HAVE TO WITHSTAND CROSS EXAMINATION!

His mistake was in not rewriting the second draft, in acknowledging that he had burned any. If the changes he made in the second draft are examined, they will clearly show he again changed the story. He eliminated all but one reference to entry (his synonym, as the testimony shows, was "puncture").

To a degree this is covered by the approval of his certification of having done this. He did turn in his notes, he got a receipt for them, the admiral in charge of the entire naval medical installation turned them over to Rowlk of the Secret Service, Rowlk turned them over to Burkley, and I have the receipts. They specify the prosectors notes. This is also clear in his testimony, when he held in his hand Xeroxes of his own notes and so testified. I have extensive correspondence on this, with the Archives and, I think, Secret Service. I will have them with me. These notes are required to be in File 371 and Exhibit 397 and are in neither. They, too, should be subpenaed. They are the most important part of the autopsy examination with the possible exception of the pictures. They may be more important, if less dramatic, and they are not subject to the technical objections of a "contract".

What is even worse about all of this I will not put in writing, but I have a copy of a document all copies of which were though destroyed. It is, in some ways, perhaps the most shocking single one in our history. Everything wrong was approved. Real MacBeth. This I got after I completed the text of the book. That is about 140 single-space, legal-sized pages. I will have it with me. And I will murder anybody who leaks any of itts secret contents. Vince and Bud both agree it is by far the most significant book yet.

Again to summarize in a different way, proper examination of Humes, he is alone of the autopsy doctors, especially bracketed with Wecht and Nichols, should establish that there had to have been a conspiracy, that his testimony and autopsy proctocol are wrong, that there had to have been more shots than conceded, that they had to have come from both front and back -even that his autopsy report so stated until after Oswald was murdered. This is one of the things that he cannot live with, I am certain, the rewriting of his report when he knew it would not be cross-examined by Oswald's lawyer, for the dead Oswald would not be in court, would have no lawyer. Here again I want to remind you of the desirability of having Specter as a witness and the alternative, if it is a) legally possible and b) really necessary to your purposes, of having me testify to the documents I discovered and read them or enter them into evidence.

Here I have divided interests. This would certainly be the end of any possible belief in the Warren Report or the innocence of those involved in it and the autopsy. It would also be ruinous to my personal interest and cost me a considerable amount of time and money invested, much more than you can imagine.

Still in strictest confidence, I add this: There were 25 military autopsy witnesses, none of whom were called as witnesses. There were no civilian witnesses at all. Everyecivilian was kept out of the room. The only exceptions are the Secret Service agents guarding the President's body and the FBI agents keeping them honest. The FBI agents were not called as witnesses and their report was suppressed. (There are also indications of an earlier report by them that I cannot find.